

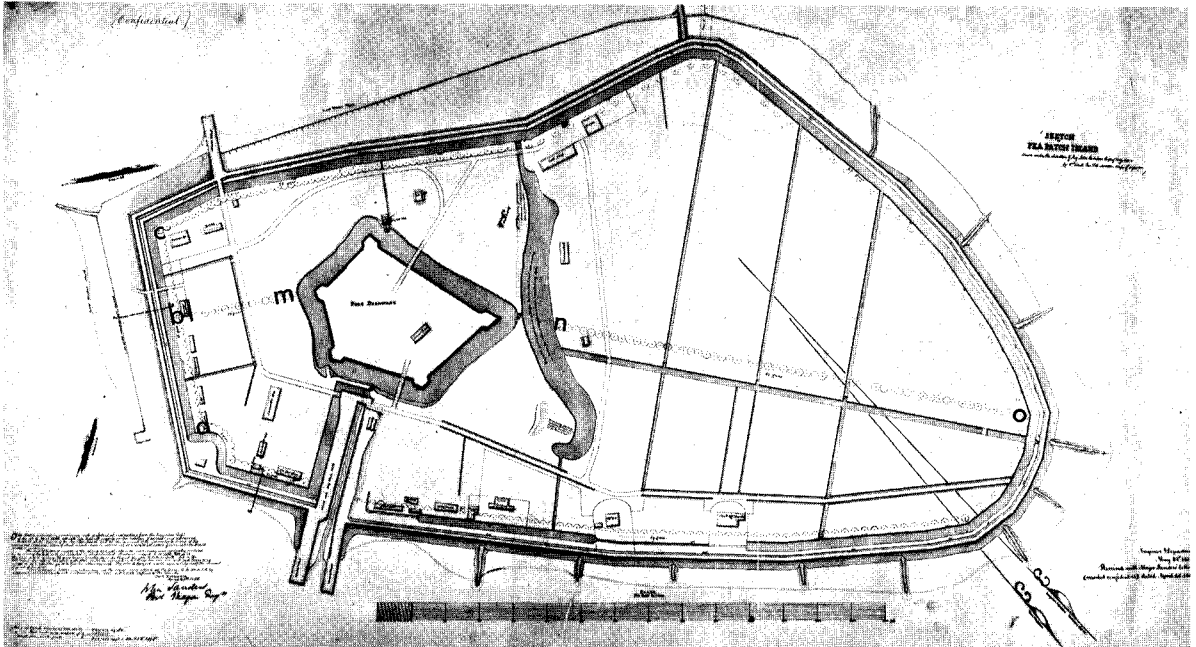
APPENDIX V

AN EMERGENCY DEFENSE PLAN FOR FORT DELAWARE

Concern for the safety of the young Republic's first capital city, Philadelphia, prompted the initial efforts to fortify Pea Patch Island in 1814. Great Britain, inspirer of earlier fears, was still suspect as a potential invader in 1855, when the above plan was submitted confidentially to the Engineer Department. Fort Delaware was in its seventh year of construction, several years short of completion, by the most optimistic expectations. The scarp wall had attained but one-third of its full height; the casemate piers had not yet reached the springing line of the arches. Major Sanders' alternative emergency plan called for arming the island as a channel defense while using the incomplete fortress as a last ditch citadel to defend the island itself. Sanders' notes on the face of the drawing explain the scheme:

"This sketch, prepared in compliance with confidential instructions from the Engineer Dept. of the fourth of April 1855, exhibits two distinct projects for the position of the exterior and advanced batteries for the defense of the Pea Patch Island and for the command of the approaches to it and of the contiguous channels, either of which projects could be carried out at a very short notice if circumstances should make it necessary.

The line of batteries encircling the island and just within the ditch, being more effectually protected by the cover of the dike is the one preferred by Major Sanders. It would mount in barbette 218 guns. The line a-b-c giving 31 guns looking directly down





Brig. Gen. James St. Clair Morton

—Courtesy of Mr. Leland Johnson

the bay, is common to both projects—but in the second project the rest of the guns of the fort would be replaced by the lines l-m and n-o with full traversing circles so as to allow the guns to fire on either channel. The second project would require only half the number of guns of the first.

Fort Delaware proper, in either case, as the works may stand at the time, to be converted by temporary arrangements into a citadel for the more immediate defense of the island.”

Line l-m was to deploy 17 guns; line n-o, 60 guns. Neither this plan, nor any like it was

ever made operational; enemy warships never came within range of Fort Delaware's batteries.

This drawing was made by Major Sanders' assistant, the controversial James St. Clair Morton, then a lieutenant. Morton achieved recognition as an authority on military fortification and notoriety for suggesting that the curriculum at West Point, including the work of the vaunted Professor Mahan, was more petrified than progressive. He was promoted to Brigadier General after the Battle of Stones River in 1863 and was killed in action before Petersburg in 1864.